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ABSTRACT

The effects of a teaching program internship on selected personal and professional characteristics of teacher interns were studied. The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program is a graduate internship built upon an extended practical experience in the laboratory school at the University of Pittsburgh. MAT is a competency based program designed for college graduates with degrees in liberal arts, education, or other professional fields. The program focuses on development of teaching skills for successful classroom experiences. Major components of the program are basic studies, research knowledge, and professional education. Performance competencies of interns in the MAT program were assessed through their supervisors' responses to the Teacher Assessment Instruments. Students in the MAT program scored significantly higher in two of the three areas tested, namely, teaching plans and materials and classroom procedures. The students' scores in the third area, interpersonal skills, were high before they entered the MAT program, and scores in this area did not significantly increase after internship. Scores and other data are displayed in a series of appended figures. (CB)

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THE EDUCATIONAL INTERNSHIP: A TEACHER TRAINING MODEL FOR THE NINETIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

Unless significant steps are taken to avert it, there will be a teacher shortage in America by 1990. In each year between 1986 and 1990, we will need 197,000 new teachers (Projections of Education Statistics to 1990-91, 1982). By 1988 the supply of new teachers may satisfy only about 80% of the demand. Incentives to join the teaching profession are rapidly eroding. The teacher oversupply of the seventies, increasing incidents of classroom violence and vandalism, the history of low teacher salaries, and expanded opportunities for women in business and other professions have conspired to reduce the number of high school graduates who identify teaching as a career choice.

The impending shortage comes at a time when American education is being subjected to a new spate of negative criticism. Although the educational system has never been without its detractors, the decade of the eighties has become an era of severe censure. After public disatisfaction with teachers and schools was piqued by excoriating articles in such widely read publications as Time (June 16, 1980) and Newsweek (April 20, 1981), the nation was subjected to a series of reports urging educational reform. The Paideia Proposal (Adler, 1982), A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future (Goodlad, 1983), and Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (Sizer, 1983) each criticized existing conditions and made recommendations for improvement. However, no other report carried the dramatic impact and the aura of official sanction of the report of the National Commission on Excellence titled A Nation at Risk (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983). Not unlike the other reports, A Nation at Risk identified the indicators of educational decline and made recommendations for improvement.

Recommendation D of the "Risk" report is labeled "Teaching" and it is directly connected to teacher education concerns. In this section, recommendations to have everyone who is preparing to teach meet high educational standards, have an aptitude for teaching, demonstrate competence in an academic discipline, and work under the direction of a master teacher during a probationary period are articulated. In February of 1984, a Pennsylvania task force report recommended changes in teacher preparation and certification that included an induction period. Paralleling the "Risk" report, the task force also stressed that efforts should be made to attract candidates of a higher caliber to the teaching profession.

As desirable as these recommendations appear to be, they may not jibe with reality. The conclusions of a Rand Corporation study (Beyond the Commission Reports: The Coming Crisis in Teaching, The Rand Corp., 1984) indicate that the least academically qualified are likely to become the tenured teaching force of the future. Rand social scientist Linda Darling Hammond charges that those students who are entering the teaching profession are less academically qualified than those who are leaving it. More disturbing is the allegation of Emily Feistritzer that one-third to one-half of the nation's schools of education are no more than diploma mills that should be summarily shut down. Feistritzer's research reveals that although the number of education graduates has decreased by more than half between 1973 and 1983, the number of teacher education programs has actually increased. The implication is that education programs are less expensive to operate and can be more cost effective than other programs and are, therefore, maintained. But, in order to keep operating, such programs have had to keep standards low and output high at a time when qualified applicants are scarce.

The dilemma facing schools of education appears to be formidable. Raising academic standards for an insufficient number of sub-standard recruits could very well become a self-defeating activity. However, there may be an untapped pool of capable people who can be attracted to teaching. Unemployed and underemployed college graduates who are ready for a shift in career orientation might be induced to consider teaching as a career. Those who would be discouraged by unchallenging courses, cumbersome certification requirements and obscure mechanisms for demonstrating competency might be attracted to an intense, high powered and challenging program that would get them into teaching expeditiously.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE MAT MODEL

Programs that require a fifth year of professional preparation exist under a number of labels. The Master of Arts in Teaching Program is a graduate internship built upon an extended practical experience in the laboratory school at the University of Pittsburgh. It is designed for college graduates with degrees in liberal arts, education or other professional fields. It is a competency based program that focuses on the development of those teaching skills needed for a successful classroom experience.

There are three major components in the program. They include Basic Studies, Research Knowledge, and Professional Education. The Basic Studies experiences are planned to facilitate the integration of philosophical, historical, psychological and biological concepts with the professional tasks of elementary teachers. The Research Knowledge component is designed to provide the student with an overview of current research findings in the field of education and to give the student an opportunity to conduct guided research in an area of interest. The Professional Education component of the internship includes all of the remaining experiences. It is this segment of the model that includes the acquisition and refinement of competencies that are required for effective teaching. In the implementation of the program, competencies can be prescribed for the student or constructed through the action of the trainee. Although student generated competencies tend to be scarce and situation specific early in the program, students move to a more reflective mode as they mature professionally. As the incumbants become more reflective, they become more adept at identifying more sophisticated and complex competencies.

The obvious strength of the model is that it is tailored to meet the needs of individuals who vary widely in background and experience. A potential weakness that was identified by laboratory school faculty was whether or not the teacher prescribed and student generated competencies were sufficient to guarantee competence in teaching (Creek & Vollmer, 1985, p.3). To address this concern, a study was initiated to determine the influence of the internship model on the acquisition of teaching competencies (Vollmer, 1982). The model was examined to determine the influence it had on changing the performance of individuals completing the extended clinical training process.

The instruments used to assess performance competencies of the Interns involved in the MAT program were the Teacher Assessment Instruments, (TPAI). Specifically, the three sections employed were the Teaching Plans and Materials, (TPM), the Classroom Procedures, (CP), and the Interpersonal Skills, (IS), instruments. These instruments were developed over a period of four years at the University of Georgia. The Georgia project had utilized thousands of teachers and professional educators in designing, developing, and field testing the TPAI (Capie, 1979; Johnson, 1980).

III. DATA COLLECTION

The TPM, CP, and IS were administered by the Teacher or Team of Teachers to whom each Intern was assigned. The first assessment using the TPM, CP, and IS was conducted in the fall, and the second in the spring. Following the Conditions for Use of the TPAI, the fall assessment was begun after the 20th school day (actual day of instruction), and was completed on or before the 70th school day. The spring assessment was begun after the 110th school day, with completion on or before the 160th school day (Capie, 1979, p. 20). In addition, individual interview sessions were scheduled with each Intern. The Intern interviews occurred three times during the school year. The interviews focused on generating data on the difficulties encountered during the training process, the most influential individuals in the competency generation process, and areas of strengths and weaknesses in relation to the TPM, CP, and IS assessment areas.

Interview data of the respondents were interpreted in the context of the competency statements of the TPM, CP, and IS. For example, if a respondent expressed difficulty planning instruction for several grade levels within one classroom (i.e., multi-age grouping), the response indicated weakness in Teaching Plans and Materials under the competency, "Organizes Instruction to Take Into Account Individual Differences Among Learners". (Table 1 indicates the time limits of the TPAI assessments and the Intern interview schedule). (Insert Table 1)

IV. RESULTS

In Year 1 of the MAT study, raw scores of the TPAI showed that all Interns made gains from pre to post scores on the TPM, CP, and IS instruments. Initially, an analysis of the data revealed significant increases in 80% of the competencies tested. An example of five of the TPM competencies tested is represented in Figure 1. (Insert Figure 1)

Overall, the individual interviews indicated that Interns viewed competency interpretation very broadly during the early stages of the program and in a more precise and sophisticated way as they progressed through the program. Interview data gathered early in the program (Nov.) on competency weaknesses suggested that Interns perceived teaching competence on a very fundamental level. Specific examples cited by the Interns were perceived weaknesses of construction of lesson plans and management of the whole classroom. As the MAT training program advanced into March, Intern perceptions of teaching competence moved to a higher level of interpretation. Intern perceptions of teaching competence became more precise and sophisticated, citing perceived weaknesses in teaching competencies such as the development of a repertoire of teaching styles and simultaneous management of small

groups. Final interview data analysis in May indicated well defined interpretations of teaching competencies.

In addition, intern interview responses identified the persons who were influential in assisting the Intern develop teaching compentencies during the clinical experience. The Demonstration Teacher, as previously mentioned, was the master teacher to whom each Intern was assigned. The Team of Demonstration Teachers referred to additional Demonstration Teachers other than the one Demonstration Teacher to whom the Intern was assigned. The Graduate Teaching Assistant referred to a University liaison person responsible for weekly tutorial sessions with Interns and general guidance during the MAT's clinical experience. As the data indicate (Figure 2), the Graduate Teaching Assistant's role as most influential person diminished throughout the year. Even though the Team of Demonstration Teachers showed a moderate increase from November to March, responses consistently indicated the Demonstration Teacher to be the most influential person in helping the Intern to generate teaching competencies, throughout the year, and exclusively so in the May interview responses. (Insert Figure 2)

V. CONCLUSIONS

A stated purpose of the graduate internship is to train beginning elementary education incumbants who do not have the competencies necessary to deal effectively with the tasks which confront elementary teachers in settings representative of typical classrooms. Based upon the marked increases in performance evaluation scores on the TPM, CP, and IS, the present study strongly suggests that the MAT Program is achieving its purpose. Of the forty-five competencies assessed by the TPM, CP, and IS instruments, thirty-six competencies showed significant increases during the program. Intern scores not significantly increased from pre to post measurements were highest for the Interpersonal Skills performance evaluation. This was expected since scores on these competencies were high at the entry level leaving little room for growth.

Previously, individuals directly involved in the clinical training experience of the Interns perceived a professional maturation on the part of the Interns as teaching competencies were acquired. These observations were generally considered intuitive and were not substantiated by any formal evaluative measures. The subjective judgements are supported by the data in the present study. Analysis of the data from individual intern interviews throughout the program strongly suggest that Interns showed considerable professional growth in competency interpretation.

Teacher education programs throughout the U. S. have often stressed that the most effective way of learning about teaching is by integrating theory with practice. Extended clinical experience and greater use of practicing teachers as leaders in teacher education are seen as effective strategies to integrate theory and classroom practice (Andrew, 1981). The present study supports this view. Analysis of data from individual Intern interviews throughout the program strongly suggest that the Demonstration (classroom) Teacher to be the most influential person in the process of generating teaching competencies. This further suggests that, in any teaching practicum, classroom teachers need to be competent teachers themselves in order to assume such a highly influential role.

Collective data of the MAT study over a three year period is shown in (Figures 3-5). Again, the data strongly suggests that individuals engaged in the MAT Internship Program demonstrated significant increases in teaching competencies. Of the forty-five competnecies assessed by the TPM, CP, and IS instruments, thirty-four competencies showed significant increases during the program, over three years of study. However, interesting to note over the three year period is the significantly higher pre scores on all instruments Data analyses indicate significant differences between pre test scores across the three years that the test was given; pre test scores being lower the first year and highest the third year.

The MAT program, as it has been modified, addresses the criticisms of teachers and teacher education programs cited in the various educational reports. It provides a reasonable educational model for meeting the anticipated teacher shortages of the nineties.

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TABLE I

October 9, 1981.....First date to administer TPM, CP, IS: Fall Assessment

December 4, 1981.....Last date to administer TPM, CP, IS: Fall Assessment

December 11, 1981.....All Fall Assessments due

March 1, 1982.....First date to administer TPM, CP, IS: Spring Assessment

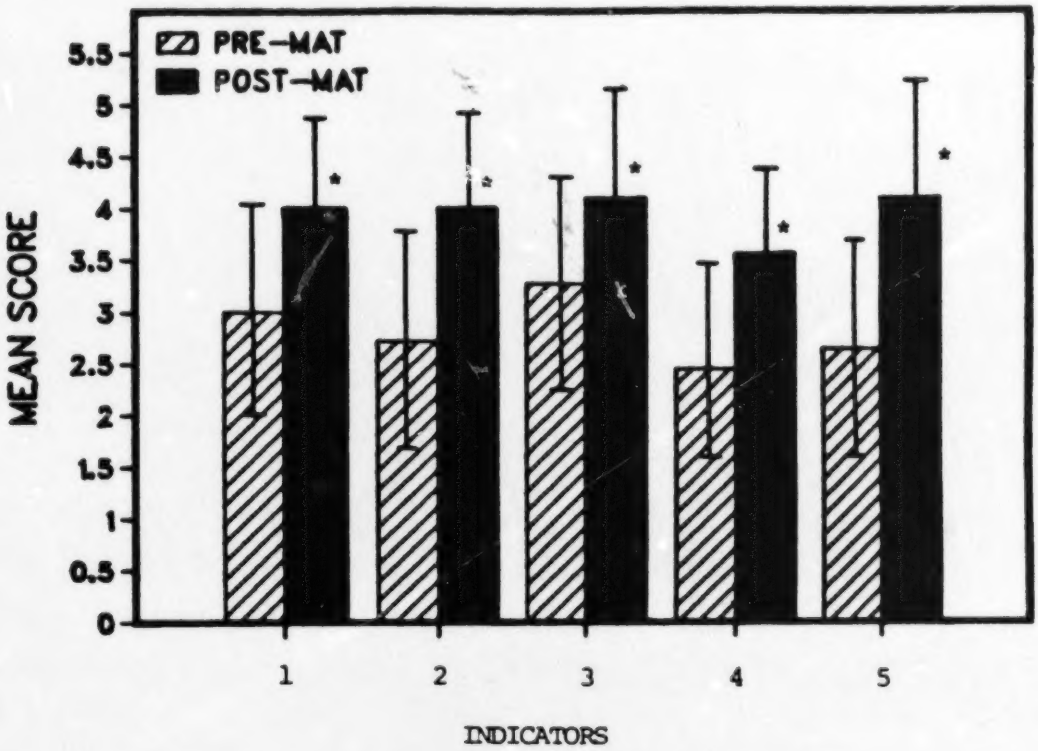
May 17, 1982.....Last date to administer TPM, CP, IS: Spring Assessment

May 21, 1982.....All Spring Assessments due

Interview #1.....November 10 & 17, 1981

Interview #2.....Week of March 8, 1982

Interview #3.....Week of May 24, 1982



1. Specifies or selects learner objectives for lessons.
2. Specifies or selects teaching procedures for lessons.
3. Specifies or selects content, materials, and media for lessons.
4. Specifies or selects materials and procedures for assessing learner progress on the objectives.
5. Plans instruction at a variety of levels.

TEACHING PLANS AND MATERIALS – INDICATORS 1 TO 5.
An asterisk indicates a significant difference between PRE-MAT and POST-MAT, $p < .05$, $n=11$.
Bars represent the mean score $\pm$ S.D.

Figure 1

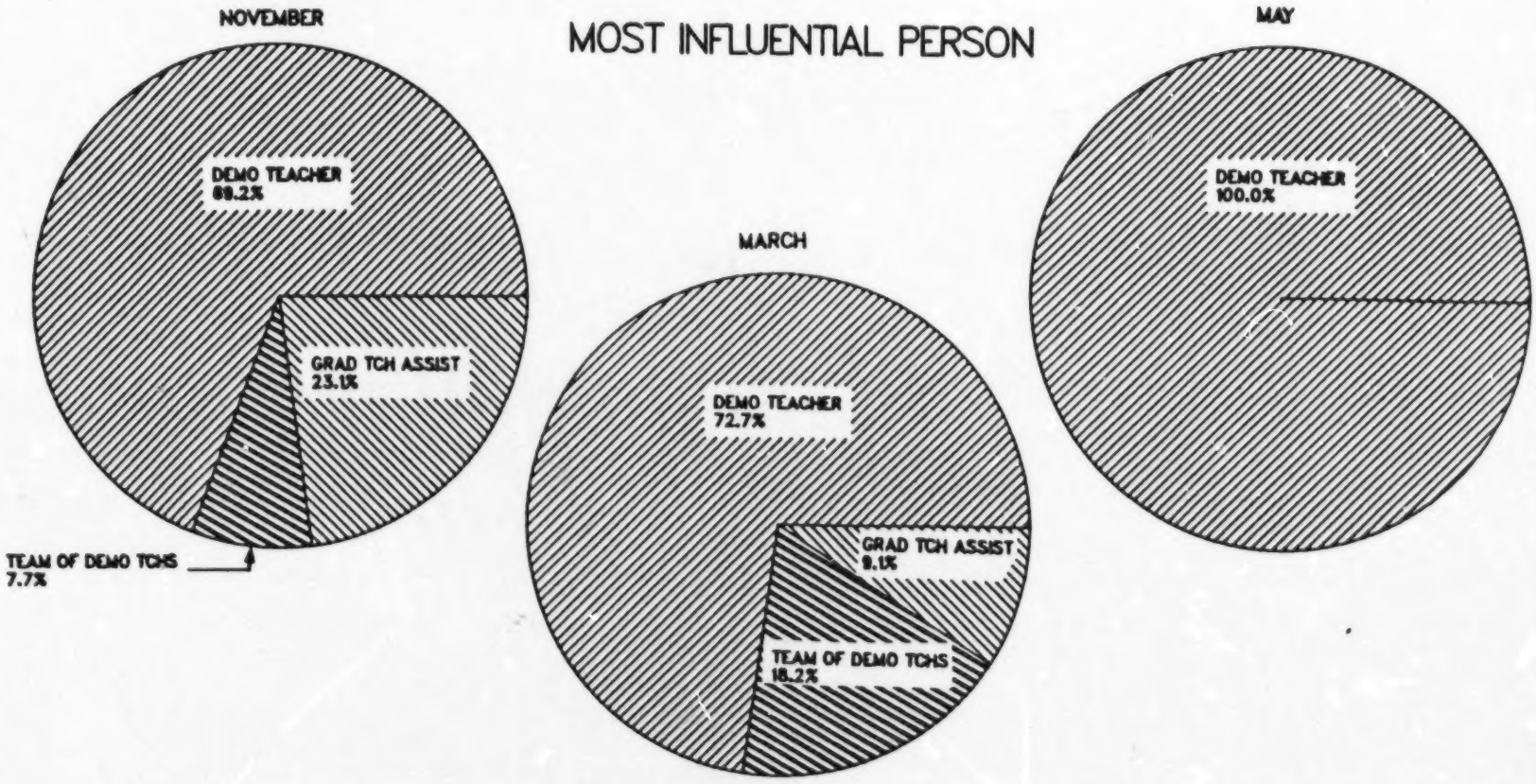

MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON
NOVEMBER
DEMO TEACHER
69.2%
GRAD TCH ASSIST
23.1%
TEAM OF DEMO TCHS
7.7%
MARCH
DEMO TEACHER
72.7%
GRAD TCH ASSIST
9.1%
TEAM OF DEMO TCHS
18.2%
MAY
DEMO TEACHER
100.0%

Figure 2

Figure 3

TPM SCORES FOR THREE YEARS

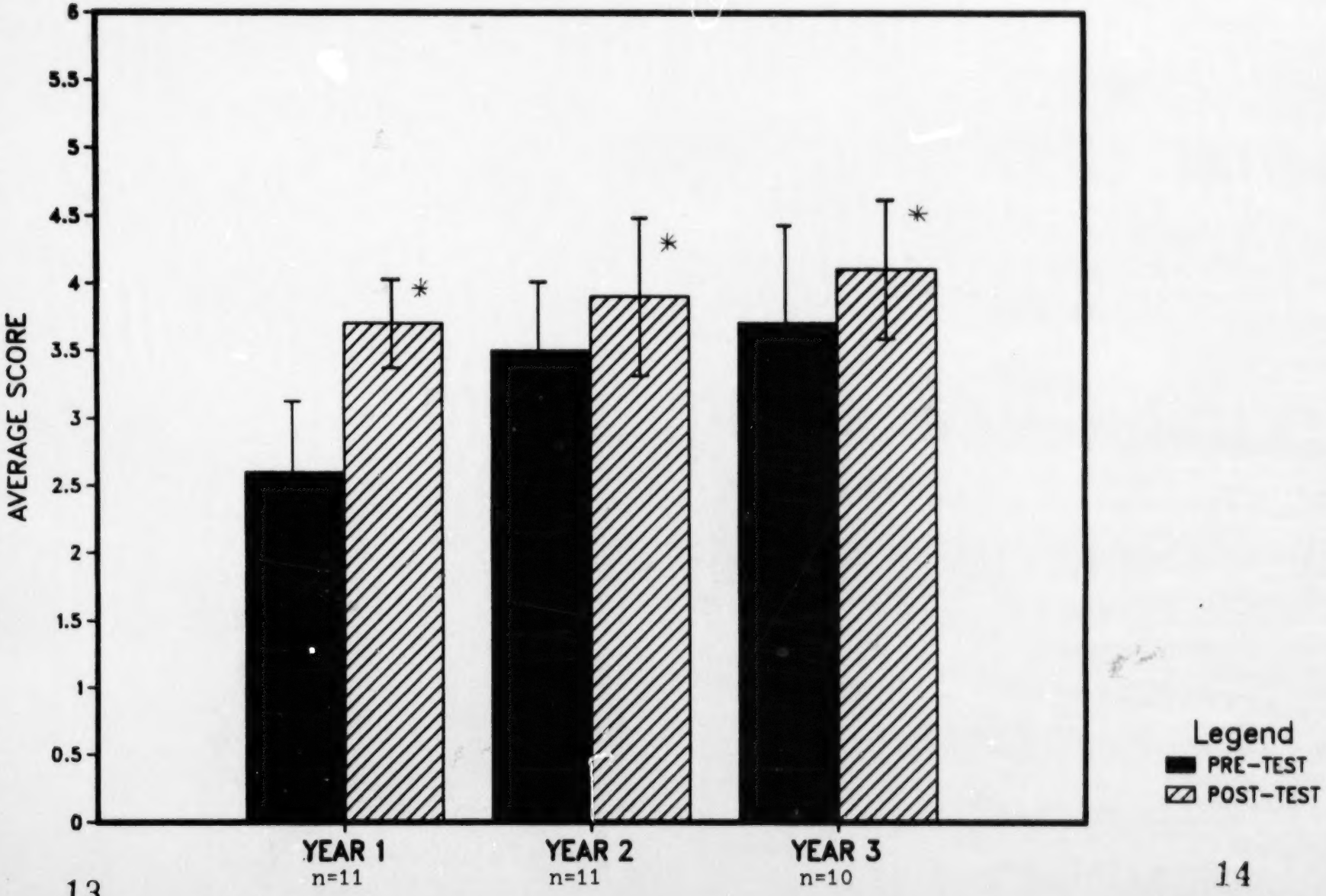


Figure 4

CP SCORES FOR THREE YEARS

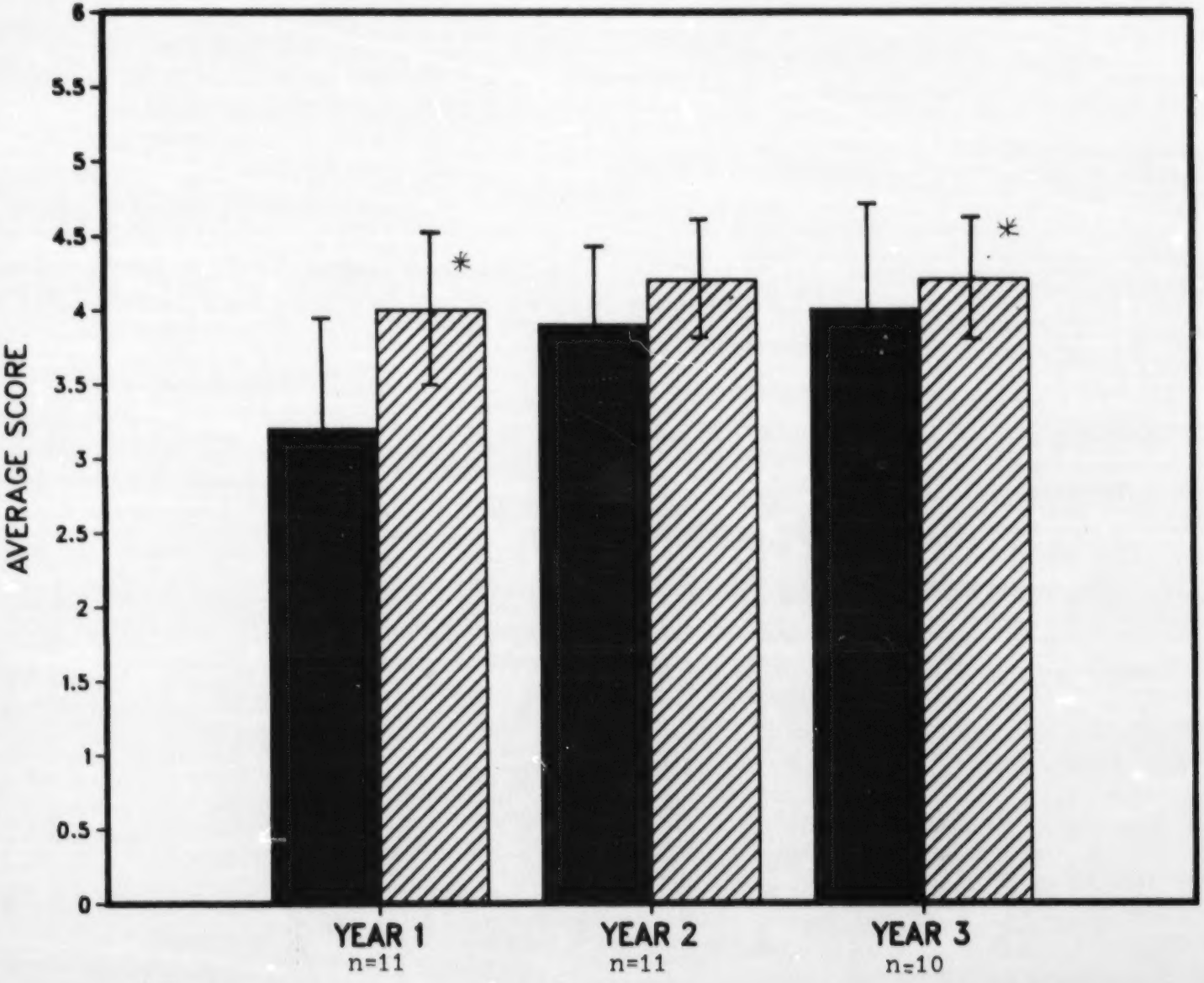


Figure 5

IS SCORES FOR THREE YEARS